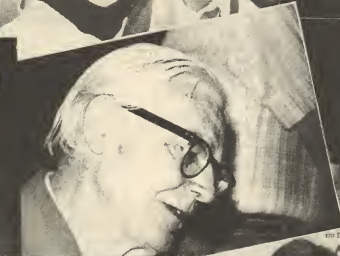
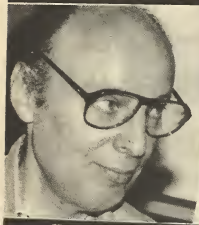


The Telegraph Wire



ISSUE 11

FREE





This issue's delightful logo is brought to you courtesy of the ever-smiling Mike Mignola--thanks, Mike. And welcome, readers, to another exercise in self-indulgence, or "How I Spent My Summer Vacation." Inspiration: Ian Anderson (and a bottle of California chablis).

Looking into the sun...and back over this summer's convention season. As I write, it is the end of August, the end of a small and precious chapter in my life. I've just returned from the Los Angeles Creation Con, my fifth convention in eight weeks--and the last, on my own personal schedule, of the summer's shows. Up, down, and all around, I feel like I've come full circle...and back to the beginning.

It all started the last week-end of June with a flight to Anaheim for one of many Creation events to follow. The Anaheim show was a bubbly affair, with giggles and good times--late nights in the hotel bar, drowning out the sound of a perfectly awful band with tubfuls of TKM (tequila, kahua, and milk); some not-so-usual convention hi-jinks including a mock wedding ceremony; the starry-eyed discovery of friendship, and more. And, oh yes, the convention itself--featuring, among others, the two most popular writers in the business: Chris Claremont and Marv Wolfman, both of whom engaged their legion of fans with quick and witty repartee. Solid entertainment, those two.

I attended Claremont's seminar on writing for comics--a new and innovative twist in the usual run of Creation programming--and then had the lucky opportunity to put my newly-gained knowledge into practice by editing one of Chris' comic scripts. (Will he ever forgive me?!) I finally met Tony Raiola and drooled over his imported wares for sale--especially the French volumes of Hugo Pratt's *Corto Maltese* series. Sergio Aragones dropped in for an unscheduled surprise visit and warmed my heart over lunch with a myriad of napkin doodles. Creation organizer Bob Schreck and his friend Bobb Freund spiced the evening activities with their two-man comedy routine--and someday, I swear, I will produce a show called "The Two Bobbs" and the BBC's *Ronnies* will never know what hit them!

The trip to Anaheim also marked my first foray to Disneyland--on the Monday morning after an all-night celebration, I *crawled* through the famed gates! Luckily my tour guides, Wolfman and Claremont, were in better shape than this poor misbegotten self. After a few quick preparatory rides, they swung me

over to Space Mountain--and I emerged with eyes wide open, ready to do it again, and again! Ah Disneyland, with all its flash and glitter and excitement, was definitely worth the 28-year wait it took to finally get me there. For a day I was a little girl again, dazzled by--my God!--Mickey Mouse, Snow White, and all the other Disney dreams I cherished in my youth.

Too soon, this Anaheim dream was over, but it left my heart soaring even as I flew the great steel bird back to the Bay Area.

Mid-July brings me to Chicago for Creation's gala Dr. Who Convention, to days of laughter and walking at night--and to another dream of you, sweet man. Come a thousand miles just to catch you while you're smiling...

The con itself was a veritable extravaganza, mind-bogglingly filled to overflowing with several thousands of Dr. Who fans, of all ages, shapes, and sizes, hundreds of whom attended the show draped in the garb of their English guru--woolen scarves and all, despite the already blistering heat and humidity of the week-end weather. The fan adulation was reminiscent of early Beatlemania: the people lining up for hours ahead of time in order to hear guest-of-honour Tom Baker speak to a packed auditorium or to obtain the treasured autograph, a multitude of gifts never ceasing to arrive, by the dozens--anything and everything, from flowers and champagne to authentic English jelly babies (the good Doctor's reputedly favourite sweet), not to mention one inventive fan's offering: an adorable little teddy bear, wearing--you guessed it--the infamous scarf! Baker arrived for his convention appearances via the back of the stage and exited likewise, quickly and discreetly hustled by car to a more secluded area of the hotel, to rest in a room with a rent-a-cop posted by the door as precaution against possible discovery by the hordes. In fact, towards the end of the two-day show, word did, somehow, leak out about the room, and--although Baker himself was actually staying, quite anonymously, in another hotel altogether--a

group of fans banded together the final evening of the con to take pictures of (can you believe this???) the hotel room door!!!

The Dr. who show was also the first convention I ever worked--from a vantage point other than the dealer tables--as Creation gave me the dignified task of checking handstamps! Not much to be said about that, except to remark on the fellow who came close to punching me in the jaw when politely asked to show his hand. (The world is full of assholes--even in Chicago--but one must grit one's teeth and smile, saying thank you kind sir, I hope you choke on that scarf you're wearing.) Michael Ruggiero, stalwart Creation staffer, helped make those two hot and hectic days more than tolerable, keeping fresh the grin on my face with his own brand of imported Long Island humour. And no, Michael, I won't tell them about the strawberries--let them guess instead!

The trip to Chicago also made it possible for me to visit the offices of First Comics--a company whose product line I both respect and enjoy--and to shoot the breeze in person with Associate Editor Rick Oliver, a man I'd heretofore only met over the telephone. Rick gave me the grand tour, let me peek at artwork for upcoming books, shared his insights on the biz, and patiently listened to my own harangues about the industry in general--the perfect host! Many thanks, Rick.

And again, the inevitable Monday arrives. With good-byes weighing heavily, I once again board that big silver jet, following the sun on its westward path. A compassionate stewardess plunks two drinks down in front of me--a blues chaser, for the moment. But the memory stays clear...

Creation finally landed in the Bay Area for an end-of-July show at the Oakland Hyatt--a show at which I ran around like the proverbial headless chicken, a constant stream of laughter bubbling at my lips courtesy of Creation Producer Gary Berman. This was the second convention I worked--this time juggling the throng at registration and introducing the guests on panel. My first real taste of what it takes to run a con--and let me tell you, it ain't easy!

Oakland Creation was truly a star-studded show, with guests Jimmy Doohan and Majel Barrett of *Star Trek* fame, fantasy illustrator Boris Vallejo (who, when asked on stage if he was a dirty old man, replied that he wasn't old at least!), as well as Marvel creators Butch Guice, Bob Layton, Marc de Matteis, Ann Nocenti, and Carl Potts--not to mention surprise appearances by Bill Sienkiewicz and Archie Goodwin, who stopped by for a day on their way to San Diego.

Running the panel discussions can be a nerve-wracking affair--especially when compounded by the antics of funnyman Layton who, after being introduced, promptly dropped his head to the table, feigning snores and sleep for a good five minutes! Nonetheless, audiences seem to enjoy the laughs, preferring glib entertainment to more serious fare. Personally, I find it depressing that the fans' most burning query inevitably has to do with Wolverine's claws and just exactly where they disappear to when not in use--or some such ilk. I mean: ho hum.

In any case, aside from the usual nerd element, the Oakland show was far from boring--and nicely capped, the following Monday night, with some serious partying in the hotel bar, rivers of TKM, rapid-fire jokes by the Grandmaster Layton, and a long-distance phone call carrying the celebration across 3000 miles...

And then, with barely the chance to catch my

breath, I was whisked away to the San Diego Con for four high-energy days (and nights) of PR, business meetings, and general frolic with madman Bob Greenberger, my two ex-employers Nor Norton and Ken Witcher, Dave Stevens, Chuck Rozanski, Deni Sim, Tom DeFalco, Carol Kalish, Richard Howell, Peter Sanderson, the entire DC contingent--including Corinda Carford, Mike Flynn, Bruce Bristow, Elliot Maggin, Bob Fleming, and Jose Luis Garcia Lopez--not to mention Comics & Comix' own Scott Maple and Tom Walton. And many many others. Thanks to Clay Geerdes, I also met a few of the so-called "newwave" artists, including Par Holman and Valentino--talented folks whose work is too often sadly neglected in the commercial sphere.

San Diego Con programming can be of the highest caliber and I attended a good number of panels. Got pissed off at the corporate line being spouted at the Direct Market panel. Got pissed off at the Adult Themes in Comics panel by publishers' insistence that it is up to the retailer to determine what should or should not be sold to minors by carefully examining every product that he/she sells--an impossible task, believe me. Got pissed off at more corporate bullshit and seeing cat yronwode forced on the defensive at the Journalism and Fan Press panel. Had more fun and got more accomplished after hours in the hotel bar! And was pleased by the bartender's unwitting compliment when he asked for my ID!

The high-water mark of this year's San Diego Con had to be Pacific's party, held at their warehouse on the Saturday night. A no-holds-barred event, with Hi De Ho's Mike Smith playing generous bartender, many spirited conversations, wild dancing, and a huge cake whose blue icing coated everyone's tongue--icing "made out of printer's ink" was Dean Mullaney's wry comment as he helped me wipe it off my face (and don't ask me how it got there because I can't remember!)--all presided over by the hosts with the most: Steve and Bill Schanes and right-hand man Dave Scroggy.

San Diego also marked the advent of LUTHORCON III --"III" because neither "I" nor "II" seemed reputable enough for this special event, held alternately in the bar late at night or behind closed doors in participants' rooms. LUTHORCON III devoted itself to serious discussion of Lex Luthor's recent costume change--with the rallying cry of "Bring back the prison fatigues!" Aside from ye humble scribe, guests included Corinda Carford, Bob Fleming, Scott Maple, Jose Luis Garcia Lopez, and the man responsible for Luthor's new space-age costume, the dastardly Elliot S! Maggin. DC's Minister of Propaganda Mike Flynn delivered a short speech and, to everyone's astonishment, special guest star Len Wein made a late-night appearance at LUTHORCON III, but abandoned the gaggle of babbling idiots after apparently resolving the issues at hand--at least to his own satisfaction.

Special aside to Elliot S! Maggin and Joshua Quagmire, to both of whom I promised reviews: don't blink! To Elliot--who told me the genesis of the exclamation mark in his name, which I now unfortunately can't recall (there are a lot of things about that Pacific party that seem to escape my memory--due, no doubt, to Mike Smith's unflagging bartending): I've read STAR RAIDERS and still don't understand how you could have forced yourself to cover up Garcia Lopez' outstanding paintings with word balloon graphics. Nonetheless, though the plot of DC's first graphic novel is relatively standard, the characters shine--Zeke and Skrimsh are especially endearing, and I'd like

to take one of those cute little Hukkas home with me!
 And to Joshua: I submit, I submit--Kelly O'Hare is not just a dumb bunny! The Crosby and Hope road movies are far from my specialty, but I loved CUTEY BUNNY #2 just the same--perhaps even more than #1, if that's possible. A very clever and funny comic--almost relegated to the "adults only" market but spared that fate by the artist's incredible ingenuity--available for \$2.25 pp. from Joshua Quagnire, P.O. Box 2221, Hollywood, CA, 90078. Gosharooty already!

Yes, San Diego: the TKM flowing, very little sleep, and cockroaches at the "prestigious" San Diego Hotel. Four days of energy and excitement--a pulsing high...before the fall.

But summer yet hangs on and, last week-end, I found myself looking into the L.A. sun and the season's last dream. The show was a slow one--through no fault of Creation's--but made lively through the efforts of my co-workers Bob Schreck and Michael Ruggiero. Guests Paul Smith and Dave Cockrum also kept the laughter level high, as did Star Trek's Majel Barrett and Mark Lenard. Though Mr. Lenard is probably best known for his role as Spock's father, I remember him most distinctly as the stern commander of the Romulans--a fierce character played by someone whom I discovered to be a most gentle man. Special effects whiz Rob Bottin showed up Sunday afternoon, to the delight of his fans, and sent many female hearts a-flutter with all six feet of his good looks! (But Rob Bottin doesn't hold a candle to you.)

And outside the con was L.A. itself, that sprawling pit of southern California. Friday marked my first visit to Hi De Ho in Santa Monica, then out for great Mexican food with Mike Smith--that boy does get around!--riding an elevator perched on the side of some hotel, holding on for dear life, holding onto you, overlooking the entire expanse of nighttime L.A. with all its neon glitter. Then, Saturday night: looking at all the stars on Hollywood Boulevard, ooh-ing over the cemented footprints at Mann's Chinese Theatre, dazzled by the year's worst movie on a giant screen--and standing at the corner of Hollywood and Vine, I discovered...you.

And here, and now, as summer's sun moves into autumn's cycle, I find reasons for waiting. All the places I've been make it hard to begin to enjoy life again on the inside--but I mean to! Though my summer convention season is over, six long-stemmed red roses remind me that it's not too late--only begun--we can still make summer. And summer always comes anyway...

Comics & Comix Opens Collectables Mezzanine



Photo (C) Clay Geerdes

An industrious ARN SABA is watched over by LEE GREENBERG at Berkeley's Collectables Mezzanine

We'd like to introduce you to Lee Greenberg, Manager of our new Berkeley Collectables Mezzanine. July 29th marked the Grand Opening Celebration of Comics & Comix' Collectables Mezzanine, 700 square feet devoted entirely to collectables.

We are carrying many items which are not normally considered to be comic shop type items. We have Big Little Books, Pulp, Collectable Paperbacks, Cinema Magazines, Portfolios, and many high-priced comics which most comic shops are reluctant to carry. We are also making an effort to stock a good selection of titles from the more obscure companies. If you've had trouble finding certain Dell or Gold Key titles, old MADs, or black-and-white magazines, check us first. We're setting no limits on what we'll carry, so let Lee know if there's something you don't see. He'll do his best to find it for you.

-- Dick Swan
 Senior Purchaser



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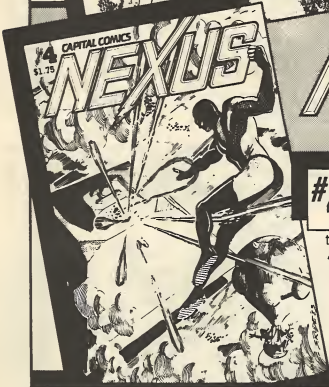
THE BADGER™

By Baron, Butler, Burchett & Truog

#2

Ham and the Badger -- a partnership so strange it makes Tim Leary and G. Gordon Liddy look like Prince Charles and Lady Di. The Badger -- a psychopath in spandex -- former residence: the state mental asylum. Ham the Weather Wizard -- a 5th century Druid who worships oak trees. What's he up to? Really? The Badger thumps thugs and Ham whips up a whopper in **THE BADGER #2**. "Ham's New Broom".

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By Baron & Rude

#4

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EGCENTRIC EVOLUTIONS

by JOHN BARRETT
PUBLISHER

Even though I had been collecting and dealing comics through the mail for several years, I really came down with the fever after attending my first convention: BAYCON, the 1968 World Science Fiction Convention at Berkeley's Claremont Hotel. The next year I drove to Houston and followed up with Oklahoma and New York in 1970. Phil Seuling's 1970 New York Comic Art Convention was overwhelming! Everyone was there: Frank Frazetta, Neal Adams, Vaughn Bode, Roy Krenkel, Angelo Torres, Gray Morrow--nearly every pro in the industry at the time! My feet didn't touch ground for weeks!

Sadly, conventions have lost much of their significance over the years, largely through sheer weight in numbers. Back in the golden days there were only three or four shows per year. Now there are at least that many every week-end. Also, for all practical purposes, comic shops did not exist then, and conventions--besides mail order--were the only real chance fans had at filling out their runs. I would save my money for months and then blow it all in a week-end!

Today, the successful conventions have found a niche. San Diego has developed into the industry's trade show, with publishers, creators, distributors, retailers, and fans in strong attendance. CREATION has developed a regional, periodical "magazine" format that keeps the fan abreast of current events, much like a living comics journal. In some areas, monthly swap-meets are successful, bringing the part-time dealers together with the public. Specific event shows--such as the Or. Who and Star Trek conventions--have also been successful.

Unfortunately, for every convention that is a hit, there seem to be two that are misses. Why do conventions fail? The largest factor is advertising and promotion. If you haven't heard about a show through at least two sources, odds are it was under-promoted. Other factors include: LOCATION--poor neighborhood, poor parking, no mass transit, etc.;

FACILITY--critical for the continuing conventions; GUESTS--at least one out-of-the-area big name is needed since guests represent the largest single attraction a show has to offer; DATE--Super-Bowl Sunday, Mother's Day, etc. have proven to be the kiss of death; ADMISSION PRICE--the lower the better, though it may vary with the programming offered; TIMELINESS--a Battlestar Galactica Con probably wouldn't succeed today; PROXIMITY--conventions in the same general area on back-to-back week-ends tend to wash each other out; EXPERIENCE--people who have worked on cons before usually know how to avoid these pitfalls; FAN ENTHUSIASM--happy convention-goers can make or break any show; they can create a prevailing attitude that will permeate the event.

Since there is a preponderance of shows, COMICS & COMIX tries to sort out which it will support and attend based largely on the above criteria. We urge you to do likewise. Good effort deserves support, and attending successful conventions helps make comic collecting a more enjoyable hobby. Even after attending some 90-odd shows, I'm still looking forward to the next one!

Head honcho
JOHN BARRETT at
Oakland Creation



Photo (C) Clay Geerdes

THE TELEGRAPH WIRE #11, October/November 1983. Published bi-monthly by Comics and Comix, Inc., 2461 Telegraph P e., Berkeley, CA, 94704. Copyright (C) 1983 individual contributors. All rights reserved. Subscriptions: \$4/ six issues. Publisher: John Barrett. Editor: Diana Schutz. Cover Design and Logo: Tom Orzechowski. Pictured on cover (from top to bottom, left to right): Harvey Kurtzman; Lee Greenberg, Butch Guice, Bob Layton, Ann Nocenti, Carl Potts; unidentified costume contest winner from Oakland Creation; Marc de Matteis; Maggie and Don Thompson; Arn Saba, Denis Sim; Gary Berman; Floyd Gottfredson; Adam Malin, Frank Miller; Majel Barrett; Boris Vallejo; April Campbell, Bruce Jones. All photos (with the exception of Don and Maggie Thompson, Gary Berman, and Adam Malin and Frank Miller) are copyright (C) 1983 Clay Geerdes.

MAIN LINES

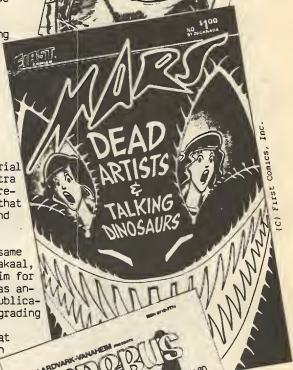
A slightly abbreviated news column this time...If you haven't already heard, Aardvark-Vanahelm has announced tentative plans for a CEREBUS/X-MEN crossover book to be produced in conjunction with Marvel Comics. Co-plotted by Gave Sim and Chris Claremont, Claremont will script over Sim's art.

The format of the book is as yet undecided, though release has been set for the summer of '84...Has anyone noticed the incomparable Alex Toth's back-up, "The Fox", in Red Circle's BLACK HOOD? Apparently not, and a shame as the grapevine has it that BLACK HOOD is soon to be cancelled...Capital reports that BAAGER #2, due any day now, is pencilled by Rick Burchett and inked by the book's former penciller Jeff Butler, and will also feature a six-page back-up by Charles Truog. Newcomer Truog is also hard at work pencilling Marvel's COYOTE for the Epic line, taking over the art on the title as of issue #4...NEXUS #5, "A Drinking Man's Tour of the Galaxy", promises to be a hoot! Advance pencils from that issue of Baron and Rude's book are reproduced below..."Grimjack" artist Timothy Truman will be pencilling and inking the lead STARSAYER feature beginning with issue #14, taking over from Lenin Oelsol...E-MAN #13 will feature First Comics' first crossover, with WARP's Chaos, Prince of Madness, taking a multi-dimensional leap into the lives of Alec Tronn, Nova Kane, and Michael Mauser...Marvel Reprint Division: "The Death of Phoenix" from X-MEN #137 will be reprinted in a 48-page one-shot on Baxter paper. Shipping in November, this book will print for the first time the original ending to X-MEN #137...Jim Starlin's "The Price", originally published in black and white by Eclipse Enterprises, will be reprinted in colour as the OREASTAR ANNUAL, to be released in October...A four-part ELEKTRA SAGA will reprint the best Elektra stories from DAREDEVIL, with additional new material by Frank Miller. The kicker is that the continuation of the Elektra story is slated to take place in graphic novel format, the first to be released in the first half of 1984...October marks the first month that Pacific Comics' entire line sees print on quality paper stock...And in November, ALIEN WORLDS #6 will feature a 20-page lead story by Frank Brunner with inks by another Bay Area local, Mike Mignola. Brunner will also contribute the cover to ALIEN WORLDS #6...That same month, in the pages of GROO #7, Sergio Aragones will introduce Chakaal, a swordswoman who is literally going to steal Groo's comic from him for a while, along with his money, pride, and heart...Starlog Press has announced the cancellation of COMICS SCENE with issue #11 of that publication. And another (good) one bites the dust...Hey, I like the upgrading to Mando paper on most of OC's titles, don't you?

And some news from slightly off the mainline...The word is that GAY COMIX #4 and OPE #5 are soon to go to press, so look for both of them sometime later this fall if all goes well...Kitchen Sink also has plans to spotlight Omaha the Cat Dancer in the pages of her own book. Reed Waller's delightful cat will be stepping out of BIZARRE SEX #10 and into her own title sometime this fall...BLOW YOUR FACE OUT MAGAZINE will be a 17" x 22" tabloid featuring the work of R. Crumb, Bill Griffith, Spain, O'Neill, and more. Look for it to be released by the end of October...



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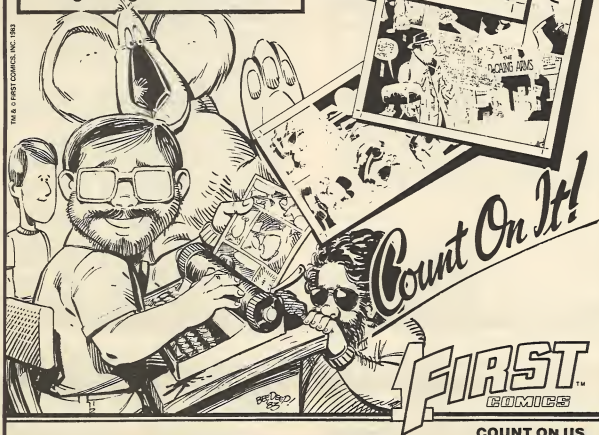
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EMAN

The way he
was meant to be.

written and drawn by
JOE STATON
inked by RICK BURCHETT
Beginning with Issue #12.

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THE LORDS OF CREATION



Creation's Producers GARY BERMAN and ADAM MALIN

In 1971, at the tender age of 14, Adam Malin and Gary Berman launched the very first Creation convention. At the time, these two young entrepreneurs couldn't possibly have predicted that this first foray into the adult world of business would eventually lead to the multi-faceted and thriving operation that Creation is today. With several dozen Creation shows a year currently being held all across the U.S., there is no doubt that what started out as the small seed of a dream in the hearts of two teen-age fans has blossomed into a resoundingly successful enterprise.

I first experienced Creation at their January '82 convention in San Francisco and have since attended too many of their shows to count! In the last year and a half, I've gotten to know both Gary and Adam as friends--and as employers, having occasionally worked for them at a few of their west coast shows. This newly-gleaned inkling of the incredible effort involved in running a convention--or, as in Creation's case, a string of conventions--suggested the topic of this issue's interview.

At the recent Oakland Creation, I cornered Gary Berman for a late-night session with the tape recorder--a session that proved to be a lot of fun and certainly the most enjoyable interview I've ever conducted. Many thanks to Gary for his time and energy with this project--and for all the laughs.

This interview was transcribed under severe pressure by Matthew Denn, copy-edited by Gary Berman, with final edits by --

-- Diana Schutz

DIANA: How many years has Creation been operating?

GARY: Well, it's really only been operating for a couple of years, but we have been running it since 1971. It's been a part-time thing for a long time, but we've been earning our livings from it for four years. The first show was in 1971, in New York.

DIANA: How old were you then?

GARY: Well--I hope this works out mathematically--but I think about 14.

DIANA: At 14 years old you started doing conventions with Adam (Malin)?!

GARY: Yeah. Adam actually did the first show alone and I helped him, and then from the second show I was his partner.

DIANA: Were you at that time "Creation Conventions"?

GARY: Yeah.

DIANA: Who picked the name?

GARY: Adam picked the name.

DIANA: How did Adam come up with it? Why that name?

GARY: I have no idea.

DIANA: [Laughs] Thank you.

GARY: No, I don't know, but Adam is very good at coming up with names--like his dog was named "GIRL" ...and "Creation". "Creation" was a name that I think basically covered the fact that it would encompass all fields that were creative.

DIANA: How did Creation get started? Did you do it part-time at first, a few conventions here and there, did you at the time envision this as a full-scale operation--as a chain of conventions?

GARY: No, what happened was that Adam had come back from going to Phil Seuling's convention in New York a long time ago--I guess the late '60s--and he was a little kid, and he came home and was telling me "Oh, this was the most incredible thing I've ever been to"--and of course it was, for someone of that age--and he said "I want to do this--I want to have one of these of my own," and I said "You're 14. You can't go up to the city and do this. That's ridiculous." But he said "I want to do it," and he was insistent upon it, and I said "Okay, let's try," and of course we did. We went to the New Yorker Hotel in Manhattan--which is now owned by the Moonies--and they said "Okay, but you've got to come up with \$800," and that was an unheard of amount for little kids to come up with. But we scraped and did all sorts of weird jobs and we got the money and ran the show, and 800 people attended, and it showed a profit--miracle of miracles. It was wonderful.

DIANA: At age 14 you did this!

GARY: Yes. We were the youngest people ever to run a convention in New York, according to the New York Convention and Visitors Bureau. It was great, and of course we continued to run one show a year at Thanksgiving for many years. We went through high school and through college, and when we graduated from college, it was something that in my position--I went to the University of Pennsylvania--I got offers from corporations to come work for them in your suit-

and-tie type of jobs and so forth, and I considered that, but I also considered the fact that I really loved doing what I do, and the fact that I had never worked for anyone ever before and I didn't care to take orders from anyone else, and I said "Well, I'm going to give this a shot." It was sort of a glamorous thing to do: to open up a little office in Manhattan and have our own little business and try to build it into something bigger, and we figured "Well, let's try." And we did open an office in Manhattan on 7th Avenue right across the street from Madison Square Garden, and it was kind of nice. We opened in October, right before one of our Thanksgiving shows, and I remember that there were just two little offices, and we sat there on a little stool and we had a phone and we had some calls, and then of course it went from there.

DIANA: When did you get the chain set-up operating, as opposed to just one convention a year or a few conventions in New York a year?

GARY: I think maybe about five years ago we went to Philadelphia, and then I think Los Angeles was the next one, and Chicago and so forth. We went from city to city, and obviously the shows were successful: some of them were better received than others but, purely on an economical basis, when they went well we continued with them, and it just grew. We are running about 35 or 40 shows a year now.

DIANA: So it was an east to west move?

GARY: Well, we started on the east coast and we are in the west now, but as I said, I think Los Angeles was one of the first cities that we started in. I think it would be foolish for anyone to say "Well hey, these guys are running all around the country and we can snap our fingers and do something similar," because it was a gradual step, and it's not easy to do; it takes an awful lot of time and you have pitfalls along the way. Each city is different and the fan groups are different. When Creation comes to a city for the first time, it's not new to those people: they've heard of Creation, because we've advertised on a national basis for 14 years already, so we have a name recognition even in a city that we haven't run in yet. The fans are aware of that, and it meets with some acceptance before we open the door. That's real important, but it takes time to build something like that.

DIANA: I'd like to know a little bit about your partnership with Adam. I've heard that you've known each other since birth! Is that right?

GARY: Well, yeah. We were neighbors--we grew up together.

DIANA: And you're both 27.

GARY: Yes.

DIANA: I understand also that you were involved in comic fandom, and you've said so yourself, given that Adam was going to Seuling's cons back then--

GARY: Oh yeah. We were big comic collectors back in those years.

DIANA: So you were involved in the earliest days of fandom?

GARY: The very earliest days. We even put out a fanzine or two: *Infinity*, which I like to think that some people still remember fondly. We had work by Jeff Jones and Wrightson and Kaluta and Gray Morrow and Frazetta. A lot of the people who are so well known now had their earliest work appear in our magazine. We helped keep them going financially when

they needed it the most. It was quite nice back then. I remember when the artists were living in these tiny rooms all together and coming up with some nice artwork. Now, of course, they're so successful, but... Yeah, we subscribed to *Rockets Blast Comic Collector* and all that stuff.

DIANA: Are you still interested in comics? Do you and Adam still read them--apart from the basic amount of homework that you might have to do to run Creation?

GARY: Adam still reads most of the popular comics--because he *likes* to read. He also will read the work of the guests that we have at the shows. Most of the guests that we do have are the popular ones that people want to see; they want to see them because they're good, and therefore Adam would like to read their work anyway. My end of this whole business is the business side--the advertising and the promotion.

DIANA: So to some extent, then, your own interests have expanded elsewhere?

GARY: Yeah, into science fiction films and reading about films and filmmaking and special effects and the personalities involved in that. Adam is also interested in that, and so is Bob (Schreck)--so that reflection of our interests is shown in what we have at our conventions now. But they first started out to be comic conventions, and they were for maybe the first ten years. Now they're half comics and half science fiction and films and media and that kind of thing, and I think most people who are comic fans have that interest now too, and the conventions are a reflection of that.

DIANA: Can you basically break down yours and Adam's roles in terms of what you do for Creation?

GARY: That's a tough one. Adam does all the work and I'm in charge of my personal appearance!

DIANA: [Laughter] Your "personal appearance" being the auction?

GARY: That's right! No, actually it divides down a little bit better than that. I deal with the business end, and I have the wonderful job of dealing with all of the dealers. (Every single one of them claims to be promised the best location in the house!) I do the advertising and the promotion, and I try to balance the money coming in with the money going out. Adam books the hotels and he handles the guests and deals with the film companies. We try not to get in each other's way that much. I think that's why we're successful: I would not book a hotel or deal with a guest, and Adam would not do the advertising or the dealers.

DIANA: Is that because your own strengths are in those areas? Why do you in particular prefer not to deal with the guests?

GARY: It's not that I don't care *not* to deal with the guests. But if we each did *everything*, there would be too many conflicts with what each person said. We are two different people and we give different answers. This way it works out fine, if everyone stays in the area that they're strongest in. My educational background is in advertising and marketing and business: I went to the best business school in the country. I think that's what's lacking to a certain extent with a lot of people in this particular business: the fact that they were fans--which is great--but they don't have any business background, and that's why a lot of them fail. That's one of the strengths that our business has: at least I and some of the people who work for me have business backgrounds. And that's

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really important--you've got to know business before you can run one. Adam, on the other hand, is great with some of the show business aspects of our operation--the flamboyance of a show, which is what the people want to see. He can handle the crowd, I think, better than anyone. He can pop in a slide show and the audience will have a wonderful time. Everyone has to recognize what they're best at, and that's the way we go.

DIANA: So right now you're running 35 to 40 shows a year?

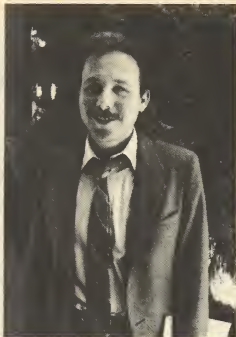
GARY: Yeah, 35 to 40. We're changing a little bit--you know, any good business should be changing--and I think what we're doing is we're going to solidify in the major markets with different types of theme conventions, as opposed to what we're doing now. We've gotten into a few of those already.

DIANA: Yes, I've noticed that you're doing a lot of different kinds of shows: the Dr. Who Con in Chicago, the mall shows, and Spy Con in New York. Having attended the Dr. Who Convention, I gather that there is a fairly large and untapped market out there. How did you get involved in branching out into all these different directions?

GARY: Well actually, the American licensee for the BBC network came to us, which was nice. We were aware of Dr. Who's growing popularity around the country, and these people studied the convention field for a year and looked at all the people putting on shows and so forth, and they said "Creation does the best job," and so we got an agreement from them to put on the official Dr. Who Convention. It was just a marvelous thing, in that it came at a great time for us, and we hit it so well in Chicago to blast this thing off by having Tom Baker as the star of the show. I've been around in this business for 14 years running conventions and I don't think I've ever seen anything like the Dr. Who Con. It rivals what happened in the mid-'70s with Star Trek, when they would have Leonard Nimoy there and there would be thousands of people. It was a love-in for Dr. Who and Tom Baker. Besides that, it was also the most successful promotion we've ever been involved in.

DIANA: With these multi-faceted shows, do you find that your audiences are essentially similar? I assume that Creation must now be pulling in many different kinds of fans or cult groups.

GARY: Yeah, well another whole subject that I want to get into is the short-sightedness of some of the major companies in this field, but I guess we'll talk about that later. We like to feel that we bring in new people to convention-going, and that once they come to our convention, they see stores represented at the show that they didn't know existed, and they say "Well, this convention comes to town every four or five months, but I'm interested in this stuff now, I had a great time here, I'm going to go to this store and become a customer of this store." And God, I mean you have to drive into the owners' heads that conventions help their business, they don't hurt it. They might hurt it for the week before or after we're in town, but we are gone for four months after that, and those people who come to the show and have a good time and buy an issue of *Starlog* and say "Well *Starlog* is a great magazine, I never saw this before, and I'm going to buy every single issue and the fifty issues before it, and where am I going to buy that? I'm going to have to go to the store. Where did I find out about the store? I saw it at the convention and I got the store's card at the convention," or "I found out about the store because they're selling tickets



GARY BERMAN

Photo (C) Clay Gendler

for Creation and I went there for the first time"--it's so important for store owners to recognize that fact.

DIANA: Store owners have complained that conventions cut into their business for that particular week--in any case, so your counter-argument, then, is that in the four months that you're not here, by the fact of your being here that one week--end you have actually increased that retailer's business?

GARY: I think it goes far beyond that, to be honest with you. I think the immediate publicity that our conventions attract helps to impact on people and to promote the idea that "Hey, comic book collecting is fun, science fiction collecting is fun, buying old comics is a good investment," and that can only help the stores. That's the first reason. I also think that when you get a thousand or two thousand or five thousand people together and they have a good time, it helps the whole atmosphere, and it helps to convince people that, for purely investment's sake, there's a future in their investment. When we're gone, they have no place to go but to the stores. I just think it's really short-sighted of the stores not to realize that. And also, about this claim that store business is hurt while we're in town: I think it may be the opposite case in a lot of different situations. From what I understand, some of the stores are doing better business when we're in town than when we're not. It's not just COMICS & COMIX--which is doing better business when we're in town--but I've heard that from other stores too.

DIANA: So how would you describe your relationship with most dealers across the country?

GARY: Are you talking about store owners or people who make a business selling at conventions?

DIANA: Both, I guess.

GARY: Well, the people who make their living selling at conventions...I would imagine our relationship is good, because they've earned a lot of money by selling at the conventions, and a lot of them would not be in the business if it weren't for us, and we run a lot of shows and there is a certain level of

consistency there, in that they know they can come to our show and make money at it.

DIANA: But can the non-store owners selling comics at conventions really afford the table prices?

GARY: Most of them aren't just selling comics anymore, though, and even if they are, I know that there are people making a good living doing it, and there are certainly a lot of people who make a substantial extra income [from conventions] on top of what they're doing. The situation with an exhibitor and a promoter is basically an adversary relationship for any kind of business, because the exhibitor always feels "Well, the promoter is making so much money," but that's not the case here. I think all of us took the time to build this business together--the dealers who have been with us for a long time, and us--and since we've built it together, there should be a strong relationship. I think in most cases, it's pretty good. More and more of our shows are selling out earlier, and that's an indication that the dealers are doing well. And more and more of the dealers are travelling all over the place with us. And the fact that we have competition is an even further indication that it's going well.

DIANA: What is the average number of tables that you sell at a show?

GARY: Well, we've had some shows where we've only had 25 or 30 tables, but it goes anywhere from 25 to 200. It ends up being anywhere from 70 to 120, on the average. It's easier for us to deal with a situation where we have fewer exhibitors at a higher price, because those people do better and it's easier for us to handle on a physical level.

DIANA: But isn't it the case that the dealer tables make it possible for you to have the hotels?

GARY: I don't know what you mean.

DIANA: Could you run a show without dealers? Could you run a show just based on ticket sales?

GARY: Sure. You can do whatever you want. You may not make any money, but you can do whatever you want. Are you asking me whether you could do it and make money?

DIANA: Yes.

GARY: Yes, you could: we could have done that at the Dr. Who Convention--we would have made a lot of money. We made more money because we *did* have a dealer's room, but we could have made money without it. It varies so much from situation to situation that it's hard to say. The people come to buy and sell comics and science fiction stuff, so you want to have a dealer's room for them.

DIANA: To go back to this expansion into different kinds of shows, is that essentially what Creation is evolving into now, as opposed to just having comic shows or just having Dr. Who shows? Are you trying to blend the different types of media into these full-blown shows? For example, we're here at the Oakland show, and it's kind of split down the middle: you've got a bunch of comic guests here and then you've got a couple of Star Trek guests as well.

GARY: We've had varying degrees of success in mixing the shows together. It's difficult to run a comic book convention in this country any longer and make it economically viable if it's just comic books. And I think if you look at what's happened recently with comic book conventions across the country not run by us, you'll find that they're not doing as well as they used to. I think there are a number of factors to

that: I think the fact that there are so many stores that specialize in selling comics now eliminates what was, ten years ago, the only place to buy old comics--a convention. Now, there's a comic store on every other block. So, we happened to have done this market in retrospect, and what happened is that when we added Star Trek to our conventions, it was good timing, it worked out well and that helped the shows out a lot. But in certain cases, Star Trek has overpowered the comics: it's not intentional, but in certain places when we've had this mixture, the comic dealers have suffered, because not enough comic people show up and there are so many Star Trek people that comic dealers don't do well. A happy medium is what happened when we ran our show in Chicago, in Boston, and here in Oakland: the mixture worked out great. All the dealers are doing okay and some of them do really well, so that works out fine. It's a hard game to play, to make everyone happy. Since we and the whole business are evolving, no one knows what's going to happen next. I think all of us experiment together, and eventually we reach the best possible worlds.

DIANA: Aside from your 35 to 40 shows in the U.S., do you have any plans to move beyond the U.S.? Canada, for example, is dying for conventions. Have you had any thoughts about moving out of the country?

GARY: Yeah, we have. In fact, we've been talking about running in Toronto and Montreal for the longest time. One of the difficulties with that is the exhibitors moving their merchandise over the border: you'd have to say "These are for exhibit purposes only," and then they ask you why you have 500 of the same poster for exhibit purposes only. You know, what are you supposed to say? So that's what's holding us back from Canada--and we'd also love to do something in England. We have some nice contacts with guests out there who have come to the United States and offered to make appearances for us in England: (Ray) Harryhausen and Tom Baker, and that would be great. We're going to get to that. There are only so many things you can do. I think getting the Dr. Who thing was a definite coup for us, and the next thing we have coming up is going to be wonderful for everybody. We've been working real hard to get this next deal: it's a major one and it's going to be really exciting.

DIANA: Can you say anything about this upcoming Deal?

GARY: No, sorry.

DIANA: Okay--well, you're doing all these shows, you're going all over the place...how many people have you got working for you on a full-time basis?

GARY: None. We have people we pay full-time, but no...! There are a lot of people all around who work for Creation. Some of them get paid, some of them don't.

DIANA: I'm talking about your full-time paid staffers on Long Island, essentially.

GARY: Well, there are a lot of people. We have four full-time people.

DIANA: That's not including you and Adam?

GARY: That's right--that makes six, doesn't it? And then around the country we have people who work for specific shows, but besides that we have a lot of nice friends in different cities who help us.

DIANA: Tell me a little bit about Bob (Schreck). How long has he been with you?

GARY: Well believe it or not, Bob was a musician who

Played in a rock band with Adam. Bob was in charge of the group, and he put an ad in the paper for a keyboardist, and Adam answered the ad, and then Bob was in shock to find out that Adam ran these conventions which Bob had attended-as a fan! These guys--Bob and Adam and a lot of people--had a really successful rock band on Long Island and then it broke up. Bob was helping us out at shows every once in a while, and when Adam and I were working alone we decided we needed another person in town who had the expertise to do a lot of the stuff that we needed, and we both agreed that the only person to fit the bill would be Bob.

DIANA: So he was the first one to come in, outside of you and Adam?

GARY: On a full-time basis, yes--there were other people who helped us out. But at that stage, we *needed* someone else, and Bob was there.

DIANA: And that would explain his relatively high standing in the company?

GARY: No. That wouldn't. What would explain his relatively high standing in the company is the fact



BOB SCHRECK, Creation's Assistant to the Producers

that everyone loves Bob, and I can't *stand* to hear any more from anyone in this country, anywhere, in any city about how great Bob is, because I'm going to throw up if I hear it again [*laughter*]! No one has anything bad to say about Bob.

DIANA: What exactly does he do for Creation? What's his job title?

GARY: I have no idea, but we can't get rid of him, because everyone loves Bob, and if we did, no one would ever speak to us again! No actually, Bob does everything. His basic job is to do all the stuff that Adam or I don't want to do--and that's really important. He actually has some specific things to do, too: Bob books all of our television commercials for us, and does a good job, too, because dealing with some of those people... It's outrageously poor how some of the local television stations operate in this country. I'm sure Bob could write a book about that. Then, he deals with some of the lesser important things with hotels and guests and so forth, and he also is manager of the shows: when he goes to a show, he'll take on the job of handling all the problems and so on, and when it comes to entertaining the guests around the country, I don't think there's another person who could do it half as well as Bob.

That's the best thing about him: no one who's ever met Bob has had a bad word to say about him, and that's really important to our business, because as a business, when business decisions are made, people tend to get ruffled feathers, and the dealers and the guests sometimes are slighted by decisions that have to be made. Maybe the decisions are out of our hands--maybe the hotel is telling us something or maybe Marvel and DC are insisting on something. Who knows what? Maybe economically something would be unwise for us, and someone may be upset at Creation. But with Bob there, those people know that sure, Bob's loyalty is with us, but he is up-front and honest about everything. He is an excellent middleman between everyone and Creation. That's probably the best thing that he does. He's great at doing programming and so forth--stuff that Adam doesn't do when he chooses not to do it. It's really a three-man team at the top, even though Bob does work for us.

DIANA: Can you describe to me a typical day at the office?

GARY: Yes, I can. A typical day at the office begins with me and Adam and Bob, and I'm generally complaining about something when we first begin the day, and then Bob handles whatever I'm complaining about! Then Bob and I sit at our desks and listen to Adam talk to hotels, and we make snide, rude comments the entire day! Adam is probably the best person in the world at this: he can hear what other people are saying while he's on the phone, so if Adam's talking to a hotel and I say "Well, we can get a better deal than that," Adam will say to the hotel "Yes, but we can get a better deal than that." His ears are amazing! It's a talent he's developed working with me over the past 14 years. Adam does his job, which is booking the hotels and the guests, and I will be booking ads and going through the dealer orders, and the ladies who work for us will be doing the tickets--and the phones are amazing how often they ring: we get calls from across the country. Adam dictates letters... It's just like any other office, basically. It's more fun to work there, because we have a good time, but everyone just tends to getting their job done pretty much.

DIANA: You mentioned earlier that you have other paid staffers throughout the country. How did that network evolve?

GARY: Well, when we first go into a new city, we don't really know too many people, but after we've been there a couple of times, some people have been nice enough to volunteer, and I believe in the fact that if a person volunteers once and they do a good job, they get *paid* after that, so that's the way that's worked out. There are just a lot of lovely people in each city who have shown the desire to work with us, and they do, and that's how that's evolved. We're always looking for good people to help, too.

DIANA: Here's the big question: describe what goes into running a typical show.

GARY: It's difficult to describe. From the very start, the city has to be selected. You have to find a location for the show, which is difficult because a lot of locations don't care to carry this type of business, and when you do find a location you have to make sure that it's in a good place and easily accessible, and once you get that, you have to get your guests, and then you have to get attractions and special events and maybe tie-ins with major companies. And when you have that set, you have to go and advertise it, and that involves direct mailing,



West coast film co-ordinator CHUCK BRILL with
Creation staffer MICHAEL RUGGIERO

tv commercials, and contacting stores and local fan groups and so forth. It's basically a lot of work, and it's easier after you're established like we are: there's a lot more credibility in having people know your name, and we have good contacts with the film studios and the comic companies, and that helps us get the attractions that are important to us. That's basically it. I don't want to give away everything that we do, of course, but--

DIANA: What about in terms of once the show has actually started? Can you give a rundown of what has to be done?

GARY: We set the locations of the dealers the night before, based on when they paid for their tables, and then the morning opens with the dealers bringing in their merchandise early, and they get set up and we show them to their locations; we have to get registration set up, which we do; we have to make sure that the events rooms and the film rooms are ready to go, and that the artists have their displays set; and then when 11 o'clock rolls around, we're ready to open to the public. What we find lately is that we have to open up early because it's so crowded in a lot of cities, so we generally ask the dealers to be ready to open at 10:30 rather than 11:00. I remember conventions I used to go to when *nothing* on the schedule would take place, or I even remember shows that I'd go to and the convention would open two hours late to the public. I think a lot of people *forget*--because they take it for granted--what was before, and I don't forget, because I was there, and I don't mind telling people what was before, because I think it's important for people to know. But I've been to [other] shows where some of our Star Trek celebrities or movie personalities have complained to me that they've walked away without being paid for their performances--and that makes the whole business look bad. I've heard about shows where the dealers were asked to put up money to keep the dealer's room open. I've heard about shows that opened and three people were there, and shows that hadn't been advertised. Shows whose promoters think they know what they're doing and are loud-mouthing about how bad our show is, and yet they open up and they have no crowd at all after working for months. I just like to say every once in a while that we don't bat 100%, but we damn well do the best job we can, and it works out pretty good. Everyone in this business works pretty hard, but we've been at it a long time, and there aren't many people who have been at it from the very beginning. There are a few of them: COMICS & COMIX, Steve Geppi, Phil

Seuling, Creation, the people from Pacific Comics, and a few others, and since this business has grown to make livings for so many people and to become so accepted, I think it's nice every once in a while for everyone else to stand back and give the people who are still around now, who were there from the beginning and helped build it, a little bit of credit. I don't say it because I think we deserve so much credit, but I think it would be nice for the major companies, like Marvel and DC and some of those people, to recognize the fact that the direct market, which is now so important to *them*, when they did very little for it in the very beginning... The people who helped it along deserve some recognition now, and of course they're getting some of it now, but not near enough what I think they deserve.

DIANA: And you feel that conventions have helped the industry grow, and that certainly you've helped the direct market grow?

GARY: Almost more than anything else, I think there are countless dealers who started selling at conventions and started making a little money and then decided "Well hey, maybe I can make a full-time business out of it by opening a store." And how much new product is sold at conventions? A lot of new product is sold at conventions, and that's important too. And how much goodwill and good promotion is done at conventions for the comic book companies and the film industry? A hell of a lot. I think that's recognized more and more now by these companies, and I think that's really important. It took a long time, but a lot of things take a long time, and there weren't that many people who stuck around this long to see it happen. I just think it's nice for some of the people who have been here from the beginning to deserve some recognition, that's all I say. And maybe to deserve some loyalty from some of the people who earned a substantial portion of their living by doing our shows or the people whom Pacific Comics supplied or extended credit to in the early years. Or the people who shopped at COMICS & COMIX six or seven years ago. I think that's important for that recognition to come.

DIANA: What is the average number of people attending one of your shows?

GARY: Well, we have run some shows in the past where I would go into the dealer's room and be able to personally name every person in the room [laughter], but they run anywhere from 800 to 6000.

DIANA: What cities and what kinds of shows have been more successful for Creation?

GARY: The Dr. Who show in Chicago was, as I said, the most successful show we've ever been involved with. Certain cities just seem to be better than others, for one reason or another. We've always been very lucky in San Francisco, primarily because of the fact that it's a good market for the subject matter and COMICS & COMIX has been really nice to us, and the guests want to come to San Francisco because it's a great town to come to, so we get the very best guests that are available, and that helps us. Los Angeles has gotten a lot better: we used to run our shows at the Biltmore downtown, and then we switched to another hotel outside of downtown, and since that time the shows have gotten much much bigger, so Los Angeles is now a nice town for us. Chicago was a very hard situation for us. It took us four shows before we actually did break in successfully: this fourth show with comics and science fiction at the Hyatt Regency this past April was a smash success--it just took time to build up. And then hot on the heels of that came this Dr. Who thing, which was a wonderful success

too. I think it's important for everyone to just stop and realize the fact that we never came into a situation and ran a show purposefully one or two weeks before anyone else. It's just not in the spirit of this business, of fandom, of anything. It could be done, but we just never did it. The proof is in the facts and the facts are there for anyone to see.

DIANA: Let's go on to the guests. When you have guests at a show, they're automatically given tables, right?

GARY: The tables are basically complimentary, sure. A lot of the people who are working now professionally in comics were helped along in their career by the fact that we supplied them with free tables along the line, and they displayed their work and the editors and the publishers came up and saw their work, and either gave them jobs or encouraged them. That's the thing that Adam is proudest of, and deservedly so: that he recognized so many of the talents, who are so popular today, early on when they first started. There are stories that are just wonderful to hear: about how one of the most popular comic artists now came to our show then and begged for free admission and a place to show his work, and of course we did it, and now he's super-popular.

DIANA: Would you like to give a name?

GARY: No. It's just endless. A guy displayed some of his sculpture, and the director of the movie *Troon* came in and hired him to work for him. This was a kid, and it was like the greatest day of his life, and his mom was hugging and kissing the entire staff. People have gotten work in *Epic* magazine, writers have gotten articles... It's just wonderful, and it happens all around the country, and we will always be there for the person struggling to get started. It'll never change: we will always offer that space for free. We could charge money for it, probably, but that's just not the way we want to do it.

DIANA: So in that same spirit, then, the local artists and not necessarily just the big name guests are also provided with free space?

GARY: Well I think you saw that here this week-end: the fact that sure, we had tables for (Bob) Layton and (Butch) Guice and Boris (Vallejo) and so forth, but right near them you had a lot of the local Bay Area talent--some of whom are famous and professional, but I think we're talking more about the up-and-coming artists. Even if they're not up-and-coming and they're just getting started, but they want to be an artist, and I just know that they are just so super-excited to be in the same room displaying their artwork with some of these people who are so famous. In a way, it may get to be a hassle for the famous person to be sitting two tables down from someone who's not that good, but I'm sure they remember eight years ago when they were in a similar situation. We'll always be there for them. I know the major companies are looking for new talent, and that's another important thing about the conventions: they're a breeding ground for that too.

DIANA: Roughly how many billed guests do you have per show?

GARY: Well at Thanksgiving, which is our biggest show of the year, we have 100--but they vary: in certain cities, we can only economically afford three or four, and then in certain cities we have ten. It varies from place to place. At the Chicago Dr. Who Convention, we had just a few guests--Tom Baker was the one main guest, and he was the star and the people were there basically to see him.

DIANA: What have your guests' responses been to appearing for Creation?

GARY: I think that most of them have a good time. A lot of them do it to come to certain cities--to see, to visit--and a lot of them also are helped by the fact that they make money selling drawings, and also they get the feedback from their fans.

DIANA: So, on the whole, you'd say that response from your guests has been pretty good?

GARY: Well, I like to think that we show them a good time and that's why they come back. And I know that's the case, because I hear stories of what goes on.

DIANA: Of wild parties?!

GARY: We've had a few nice parties I can recall. Some of them we've had that I can't recall! We've had some good times, and we try to make it fun for the guests, and that's important because they're basically really nice people who take the time from their schedules to be with us, and we appreciate them.

DIANA: How do you go about getting your guests for the most part?

GARY: Most of the guests that are popular now grew up with us in this business. One of the hottest comic artists working for Marvel now worked on a fanzine with Adam 15 years ago, and that's just typical of the type of relationships that exist in this business. It's a small kind of community and we've been with it for so long that we've known a lot of the people for a long time. It's a personal relationship, and we are fans of their work, and they appreciate that. I don't think that they would like to do the shows as much if they didn't realize that the people running the shows were fans, as well as being able to professionally organize a convention. The fact that we're fans of their writing or their artwork or their films or their tv shows, coupled with the fact that we like to believe that we know how to do our job, is important. There are the fan groups who are just fans, who run conventions solely for the joy of running them, and they get the guests and the guests don't get their fees or something goes wrong or no one shows up. Then you have a new thing now: people trying to run conventions solely to make money. They are not fans, and they are in it to make money, and that's the whole opposite end of the spectrum. I think the combination of the two, which is what we have singularly in the business now,



Wild convention parties?!

is really important, and I think that shows to our audience, who likes to see a professional show that's enjoyable and has the heart of the fan running it. An entertaining event that is being run by people who just as much enjoy being in the audience as presenting it. The fact that everything runs on time and the guests that we advertise appear when they're supposed to--the audience appreciates that, and that's why we have the loyalty of the consumer.

DIANA: What constitutes a good guest, from Creation's vantage point?

GARY: Any guest that makes the audience happy. There are a lot of good guests, and some of them are better than others, and some of the people who are new and popular take some time to become a good guest. Adam and Bob are really good at getting those people to open up to an audience and at making them into good guests, and then everyone is at an advantage, because when the guests are great and the audience is entertained, they become customers of that artist and the artist's royalty checks increase down the line. I think that's a proven fact. Now, the artist and writer and editor teams have to be promotion people too, because of the royalty system. I think a lot of the creative people realize now that they're salesmen too, and that's making them make more appearances, which is good. We have a great time working with the creative people to make them sell more. That's the idea.

DIANA: Can you give me a couple of examples of really terrific guests and tell me what it is that they in particular do that works well for you?

GARY: I've always said that Chris Claremont is a great comic guest. He will spend time with everybody who wants to talk to him, and he'll just be available.

DIANA: And he's reliable, I understand.

GARY: Oh yes. A personal thing may pop up with anyone, but he knows when he's advertised, how he's advertised, and he's there. He puts on a damned good show for the audience too: they're entertained, and of course they love X-MEN. John Byrne, of course, is beautiful to work with--very professional. The people love him, but beyond that, he's willing to spend the time to make sure that everyone goes away happy. When the two of them appear together--which they do now--it's just an electric moment for the audience and for us. We've had the rare opportunity and pleasure to have them together on the same stage, and it's been great fun.

DIANA: With a referee between them?!

GARY: No, they don't need a referee anymore, and that's great. Again, they are promotion people now, and they realize that the excitement they create is going to help sell their books--and I'm sure it has, and it's nice to see. Besides them... Everybody's going to get mad if I don't mention their name now, right? I have to mention every single person who's ever appeared at our convention or they're going to get pissed off! [Laughter] Everyone who's ever appeared for us is the best guest we've ever had.

DIANA: [Laughs] That's very diplomatic. Let me ask you about programming--the schedule of events. Is it essentially the same at each show, varying only slightly depending on which guests are involved?

GARY: It depends. There are basic subjects that are always covered. You have your regular Creation features, which we do at every show: the auction, which is a lot of fun, the costume parade, the art contest, the guest appearances, and the previews of upcoming science fiction films, which always vary, and the

slide shows which we always have vary too, but we'll carry the same slide show to each city at least once.

DIANA: With regard to programming related to the guests, is it aimed at hyping new product only?

GARY: No, I don't believe that's the case. Much of it is in response to the audience's questions, and that would cover what's already happened, right? My job is not to be really in tune with all of the functions.

DIANA: I realize that, but although you don't do much of the programming, you're at least aware of what gets scheduled and so on, and there does seem to be a pattern to the programming, at least with regard to the guests, in that they get up there and they hype their new product, and it seems to me that there is room for a lot more imaginative or instructive kinds of programming. Now, you've branched into that a little bit: you've had writing seminars run by Chris Claremont, for example, but it seems to me that there is still more room to get away from simply "This is what's coming up, this is what we're going to do, so we're going to push our new product here on stage and tell you about it." Do you foresee moving into different kinds of programs or do you think that this hype of new product is demanded in the sense that it's a reflection of what the audience is looking for?

GARY: I think that what you're saying is true: there's definitely room for improvement on anything. But if you develop a panel that is so specific on a subject matter, it's possible that you won't get the audience that you want for that event. We used to have more panel events on very specific subjects; it just didn't seem to go over as well as you would hope it would, so when the guests get on stage they answer the audience's questions and that pretty much offers the audience what they want to hear. I think the fact that we're running so many shows doesn't allow us the luxury of developing such an intricate program with so many different things at each show. I think we're going to try to make a greater effort, and as a matter of fact, this new thing that we have coming up will involve some wonderful new programming ideas. The best that's ever been done at any show.

DIANA: Aside from the auction, what are your own personal favorites, in terms of the programming?

GARY: Well, there's the auction! [Laughter]

DIANA: What is it about the auctions that you like so much, Gary? Is it the fact that you just keep taking in more money?!

GARY: No, actually, I don't like the auctions. I don't care to do them, but no one else wants to do them, so I get stuck with them!

DIANA: [Laughs] Right--except I don't believe you!

GARY: See, I didn't like to go on stage for a long time. I just didn't care to do it.

DIANA: Why is that?

GARY: Probably because I didn't like to go on stage a lot! So anyway, Adam didn't want to do the auction at one show, because he was too tired. I frantically searched the entire convention for someone else who could do the auction, and I found someone, and I was keeping the records, and the person was doing such a horrible job that I had to take over. At that point, it was one of those magical show business type happenings where a star was born [laughter] and I really loved doing it and the audience had a good time, and so we decided to make it into more an entertainment

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event rather than purely an auction. It's a fun thing and the audience likes it, and I might say that in certain cases, it has drawn a bigger crowd than some of our guest stars. The auction is one of the most popular events that we have. We don't make any money doing it either. We lose money sometimes.

DIANA: It's your "rip us off" auction.

GARY: Yes, and we do get ripped off. But it doesn't matter, as long as people go away happy.

DIANA: Okay, on to the fact of competition. Do you feel that the annual conventions like San Diego Con or Seuling/Forbidden Planet Con or ChicagoCon represent any kind of threat to Creation?

GARY: I don't think anything is a threat to anyone in this business. "Threat" is the wrong word.

DIANA: Do they take away from your business--do they cut into your potential audiences, or does Creation schedule around those shows to avoid audience conflicts?

GARY: Creation has always avoided scheduling against any convention that has pre-existed it.

DIANA: The fact that they are annual conventions indicates to me that they are of a different nature than the Creation shows.

GARY: Yeah, they're definitely different. I've been to all of those shows, of course, and they're all done very well. This goes back to what I said before about the people who were around from the beginning. Who in this business deserves more credit than Phil Seuling? Even though we've had major differences and so forth, he's really the person who did more than anyone else to build this whole business for everyone else, and he deserves more credit than anyone else. San Diego has been around for a long time. No one would think of doing anything to hurt those conventions, and I think our Thanksgiving show should be included in that group too: that one's sort of separate from our others because it's the only three-day show we run, and it's been around for 14 years, and it's really the special one.

DIANA: Up until recently, Creation has pretty much enjoyed a monopoly in the business of chain comic book conventions--

GARY: What do you mean by "chain"?

DIANA: --conventions happening virtually every week-end throughout the country--

GARY: What do you mean by "monopoly"?

DIANA: You haven't had much in the way of competition.

GARY: What do you mean by "competition"?

DIANA: There haven't been other people doing what Creation is doing--there has not been another organization setting up conventions that are run throughout the country a number of week-ends a year.

GARY: What do you mean by "year"? [Laughter] The type of competition doesn't matter--if it's the same company running shows in different cities or just a show that exists in a city. There are *thousands* of comic book/science fiction conventions, Star Trek conventions, held around the country. Each city has at least two or three hundred shows a week-end! [Laughter] Competition is competition. Creation has hopefully developed its own market in each city.

DIANA: So do you view the advent of Multi-Media Conventions as healthy competition, or do you suspect that this new organization could cut into Creation's business?

GARY: Well, I haven't heard that much from that company in the way of results, so I can't really say that much about them. I know I've read a lot that they've written, but then I read a lot. I think it's always really easy to criticize what exists already, and anyone can do it. Anyone can say "I can put out a better comic than Marvel comics" or "I can build a better bridge." It's easy to look at what's going on and say that you can do it better, but when it comes down to it, can you? From what I see, they can't. The only thing I object to is dealing on an unethical level.

DIANA: Is it true that Multi-Media is in fact booking conventions in the same cities as Creation one week before your already scheduled shows?

GARY: Yeah, one week, two weeks, three weeks--whatever. But that's cool. Everyone has to suffer the consequences of what they do.

DIANA: Is that not a direct attempt to cut into your business?

GARY: Yeah, maybe. I don't really know what their function in life is. Since this happened, we've been more successful than ever. We have not seen them accomplish anything.

DIANA: There have been certain complaints regarding a general lack of organization on Creation's part: last-minute guest cancellations, less-than-knowledgeable registration staff, and so on. To what do you attribute this? Is that just inherent in the nature of running 40 shows a year?

GARY: No. First of all, guest cancellations don't happen all that much--if you look at the record--but we will never advertise anyone unless they have confirmed an appearance. I mean, it's ridiculous how many times we confirm! So, I think the cancellations you'd have to pin on the guests themselves, not us--and I think they'd agree with that too. What was the other one?

DIANA: Lack of knowledgeable staff at registration.

GARY: I think the registration people could know more about the show, yes.

DIANA: Why do they not?

GARY: Well, because when you run 40 shows a year...! [Laughter] No, because we travel from city to city and the airfares are so expensive, we can't afford to bring so many people from New York who have a real knowledge of what's going on, who are aware of all the intricate details involved, and we have to depend on the people helping us out in that particular city. It's a problem, but we do the best we can. Also, the registration people are usually busy processing the audience, so they don't have that much time to spend in answering questions. I think what we need is one person in charge of dispensing information.

DIANA: Do you feel that Creation is completely beyond reproach? What are some of the more important changes you'd like to see happen in your organization?

GARY: Better tie-ins with film companies, because we've been really lucky so far, and we've done far better than anyone else, but we're basically the convention people who got the film companies interested in promoting to the direct market in the first place. That was a wonderful coup that we got, and it's wonderful to be able to present to the fans advance stuff on the science fiction movies that are coming up. I'd like to see that developed to a far greater extent than it is now. That'll take some time, but this new deal we have cooking now will bring that to



ADAM MALIN and costume contest entrants

us, and it'll be great. I'd love to see some co-operative advertising with the big companies to help our conventions draw a bigger crowd, which would help the exhibitors. I'd like to see more loyalty from the people who make money at our shows. I'd like to see more organization at our show by our staff, because we need some work in that area. You know, it's not all that easy. I'd like to see us have a better program book, which would be great. I'd like to see some of the dealers have nicer exhibits. I think maybe the film programs in certain cities could be improved. But basically I think we give the people entertainment and they enjoy it and that's why they come back, and the feedback that we get is that most people have a great time. We give the people what they want. The public decides what happens. You can have all the competition in the world, but the public is smart enough to find what they enjoy, and they're smart enough to feel the heart of the business, and they know where the heart is.

DIANA: Aside from the deal that you can't talk about, are there any future goals or strategies or new directions for Creation?

GARY: Well, I think we look at ourselves as an entertainment company, and we look at ourselves as the best vehicle for major media companies to reach the direct market in person. That means comic book companies, film companies, maybe even in the future music companies--to get that in-person, direct contact with their audience that is not available in any other medium. We want to be the company that offers that service--and we are now, to some degree, that company. We want to develop into a much bigger entity than we are now, like every other small business wants to do. The growth is slow and painful and difficult, and you lose some and you gain some, and for every two steps you take forward you take one back, but that's where we want to go. I think we've had much greater success with approaching some of our goals lately because of the impetus of having people running on our tail. And because of what happened to us with the competition, we have landed some

fantastic stuff.

DIANA: With regard to Creation audiences, can you describe the typical Creation-goer?

GARY: I think we have two typical types, depending on science fiction, Star Trek, or comics. I think it's high school/college, someone who reads a lot, someone who's creative, someone who hopefully is above average intelligence. I think that would be the description of the typical person. Then we have our fringe elements, which everyone who's ever been to a convention is familiar with. The Star Trek/science fiction types are a little bit different from the comic book types.

DIANA: But the great majority seems to be male, for one thing.

GARY: I don't think so--not of Star Trek and science fiction media--it's more of an even split. It makes it more of a social type of atmosphere than it was eight years ago.

DIANA: I have noticed that your audience can vary greatly with the type of show you're putting on. For example, at your Dr. Who Con there were families, a lot of very old people...

GARY: One person died at the show they were so old!

DIANA: What???

GARY: That's a joke. Yeah, we had a whole load of people with walkers! We had a special walker section in the auditorium, there were so many old people! We had a display of Polident--that was one of the sidelines we had because the audience was so old! We had lectures on gum decay, we had slide shows from different nursing homes--

DIANA: [Takes time to pick herself up off the floor after totally dissolving into fits of laughter] You yourself came out of fandom, and presumably at one time, if not now, had a certain affinity for it. How do you deal with the current crop of fans? It's much different now than it was then.

GARY: It's much bigger now. I think that the people are wonderful, and I love the fact that they have a good time at something that we work awfully hard to put on, and it's just rewarding to see them. The thing I love best is the little kid waiting on line with his parents, and the dealer's room opens, and they're real excited to get in there, and they see 100 tables of comics and science fiction stuff, and you see the eyes of the kid light up and say "My God, look at this!" and that's nice to see, because that was us 14 years ago. That's something special, because you don't lose the knowledge of the way you felt back then. It's not the same any longer for people who have been to 100 shows, but it's nice to look at the little kid and see that that's the way you were--because you don't forget the way it was. It's exciting for them, and it's exciting for me to see that.

You can be a part of the next Creation experience in San Francisco, Saturday and Sunday, November 12th and 13th. The show will be held from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., both days, at the Amfac Hotel, 1380 Old Bayshore Hwy. in Burlingame. Special guests include PAUL SMITH and CHRIS CLAREMONT of X-MEN fame, Marvel inker JOSEF RUBINSTEIN, actor MARK LENARD of STAR TREK III, and many more. For more information, call the toll-free Creation hot-line at 800-645-6579.



In keeping with this issue's focus on conventions, several members of the comics industry (including writers, artists, editors, publishers, as well as sales representatives and retailers) were asked to comment on the subject of conventions, with special regard to what cons have done (or failed to do) for them. The number of responses I received was surprisingly high--and to all those who took the time and energy to reply, my sincere thanks. And now, in no particular order, here's what the pros have to say about cons...

I've enjoyed cons as a way to see other professionals I'd normally never get to visit. Being able to bullshit about the biz and share some insights is especially valuable for folks who--like me--don't work in N.Y. in a full-time capacity. Makes you feel more a part of a field instead of a lone creator.

Because some of the info exchanged is about business, it has occasionally been useful in doing biz--knowing what companies were making what kinds of deals, etc.

The other good thing has been meeting fans. I like the feedback and response, and am very interested to hear what most of them think and feel about my work.

To a lesser degree, cons have served to put some up-and-coming artists in touch with me, and the mentor in me enjoys lading out advice.

Two major disappointments overall (over 10 years of cons!): the programs rarely make good use of the talent at all and it's a rare con that has good panels or talks; and I've only made money at one con. Originally, I had thought of them as a way to sell books, original drawings, etc., but with some few exceptions, only the mainstream artists can gather any good amount at cons. Sigh.

Lee Marrs
Berkeley, CA

Whenever anyone or anything attempts to enter a highly competitive field, recognition is the first step towards success. It's not always an easy thing to attain. One could spend a fortune attempting to be recognized. Comics conventions have allowed me to meet with a concentration of comics people at one time--allowing myself and First Comics to present, be scrutinized, and promote ourselves--and be recognized. Not only by professionals in the field, but also by fans, consumers, retailers, distributors, and press alike. Inexpensively and efficiently.

Ultimately, though, comic conventions are for fans. And the goals I now wish to accomplish for myself, First, and comics cannot be accomplished at conventions. Obviously, the ability to promote, receive feedback, and inform remains, but what the conventions inherently fail to do is provide a conducive environment for members of the industry to grapple with the problems that hold the comics industry back.

A "professional" convention, one in which only professionals in the field--retailers, distributors, creators, editors, talent, management, foreign publishers,

and the like--are the only attendees, is what's needed. A convention where major speakers from other industries talk--informing us of what's worked in other markets--so we can move our industry forward. A convention where workshops for management, talent, editors, and retailers can deal with common problems facing us all.

This type of convention is nothing new. It just hasn't happened in my experience of comics conventions. While today's comic conventions are still exciting and fun places to be, they don't seem to progress in their programming for the industry itself. If someone out there in the convention world, in conjunction with what they're already doing, would promote a "Comics Convention for Professionals", then comics conventions would fulfill all my expectations and needs of them.

Rick Obadiah
Publisher, First Comics
Evanston, IL

I can answer your question in less than 250 words; indeed, I only need three: Feedback, PR, and Contacts. Feedback--since Poughkeepsie is not a bustling center of comics/publishing activity, we can't easily sit down to lunch with our peers and shoot the breeze about how we're all doing. Feedback from the folks--pro and fan--we meet at conventions fills that vital gap. PR--granted, ELFQUEST may be among the very best-selling independent comics going, but there are still a whole lot of people out there who never heard of it. If someone gets interested in EQ because they saw us at a con, that's one more paying reader. Contacts--we never know so much that we can't learn a bit more by meeting someone new who has a fresh idea or a different perspective. Conventions are an excellent place to do this, since they are semi-permeable membranes that serve to concentrate talent in a small place for a time. We intend to keep them on our list of "Things to Do" for quite a while yet.

Richard Pini
WaRP Graphics
Poughkeepsie, NY

The central issue seems to be: What do cons want from pros and how does this relate to what fans want from pros at cons? Most fans want to meet us; Some want autographs, some want to show portfolios. A

limited number want to attend panels. We make ourselves available for all of these activities. A good con makes all of these activities possible, and it makes us (the pros) feel at home while we are doing what fans want us to do. The cons exist to make money; pro attendance helps them do so. In exchange, cons offer pros a place to publicize projects and meet fans and other pros. Ideally it's a symbiotic relationship: fans, pros and cons in harmonic equilibrium.

As I write this, I am still frazzled out from attending four comics cons in five weeks. Each con was different, each had its own advantages and drawbacks. It's hard for me to generalize about things. Let me particularize instead.

The Philly Multi-Media Con was organized very well from a pro's point of view. We were treated well, given free food at a Saturday breakfast, and had a nice place to set up our table. The only personal snag was that the programs (panels) were run in an extremely uptight manner, with bad vibes between the person running them and a few of the pros. This was most likely due to the fact that the panels were all being videotaped. However, at the Chicago Con, where programming is run on an equally rigid time basis (without videotaping), there are no unpleasant scenes. Thus, I chalk it up to personal tension. It didn't ruin my time, but it did make me wonder about the good will of the person involved.

The Chicago Con, as noted above, ran quite well. This con makes pros feel right at home, hands out personal info packets (including promo for various Chicago tourist attractions) and it is generally the con I respect the most. This year, however, our table was in a virtually inaccessible area. After three days, I still found that many people didn't know where the table was or that I was even there at it. I am not the only person to complain about this problem. The other drawback of the Chicago Con is that the air conditioning usually fails. This year was no exception.

Houston was a pro's delight. We got free food in huge quantities and were treated like royalty. The only problem some pros had was that the fans at Houston spent very little money on sketches, thus limiting their income from the con severely. This didn't apply in my case, of course, as I am a writer. All artists and writers got a great section of tables to share and we had a great time goofing around.

San Diego is the "trade con" the place where pros get together to discuss deals. As such, it is a frantic, no-fun con for me, because I'm always doing something: going to meetings, trying to set up meetings, being introduced to new folks who want work, looking at portfolios. The San Diego Con's biggest hassle is that there is absolutely no respect shown to individual pros, due in part to the sheer numbers of them who show up each year. No info packets or pre-made badges at the door, no one to make you feel at home. Instead you are treated like a gate-crasher when you try to get in the first time--and this time was weirdest of all, with a suspicious gate-keeper telling a guard to "watch those guys" as we made our way to the pro registration desk. When it turned out our names were not on any of the info packets (this despite our being on panels, having taken an ad out in the con book, etc.), our guard got very uptight. The guy at the desk finally found out that our names were on his master list and agreed to admit us, but this sort of thing can easily spoil one's temper, especially if one's name has been used in ads and one is expected to appear on a panel or two. It seems they want to use us, but not to treat us nicely. We pay our own way at San Diego: no free rooms, no transportation, no free food, no nothing. And after all of that, it would be appreciated if the people who make up the

panels would stick by the agreements made months earlier about dates and times: this year we took out a full page ad in the program booklet mentioning our Friday panel (agreed to well in advance) only to arrive and find our panel had been scheduled for Sunday. Not only was the ad invalidated, it also turned out that NONE of our artists and writers had expected to remain until late Sunday, figuring that the panel was on Friday. We cancelled the panel. Too bad.

Each con is different too in what it seems to WANT from pros. In Chicago and Houston I was kept busy signing autographs all day. In Philly and San Diego nobody wanted by John Hancock at all. In Chicago I was mobbed while trying to write my Buyer's Guide column in public; in Houston I was very politely left alone and people stood and watched me, waiting until I got to the end of a page before asking to speak to me. In San Diego there was no electrical outlet for my typer, so I had to do the column in my hotel room. In Philly we looked at plenty of portfolios, and we did so again in Chicago and San Diego. In Houston very few portfolios were offered for our inspection and commentary/criticism. Philly and Houston had the smallest crowds at panels I attended; San Diego had the most.

So what have conventions done or failed to do for me? Well, some of them (like Houston and Chicago) boost my ego and allow me to meet fans. Some of them (like San Diego) seem to function as a meeting place to put together business deals. Few of them make me feel really bad (this year San Diego came closest) and few of them make me feel really good (this year Houston came closest). I guess cons are about the same as life.

cat yronwode
Guerneville, CA

Tom Disch, writing in *F&SF*, compared conventions, in the role they fill and the needs they satisfy, to old-time church meetings.

It's a good argument! I know people who go to conventions practically weekly, people whose only social and sex life is at conventions, people who've gotten married at conventions. Conventions allow us to gather together a sort of extended family.

I don't know at what point this becomes unhealthy, but if the only people you know are fans, you're probably past it.

I think conventions serve the comics and science-fiction professional (including myself) most by promoting, and *proselytizing for*, the field. A kid with a passing interest can attend a convention and become a fan, a customer, a *buyer* for life. And someone who has been interested in comics or sf, has been a fan but is about ready to *lapse*, to move onto another interest (cars, girls, scientology, accounting, or whatever) can be *saved*.

For the past several years I've liked conventions less and less, not entirely because I've gotten jaded. A convention is *supposed* to be a *meeting*, not a circus or a supermarket. The worst are the ones run as "shows". And a bad convention fouls the water for everyone.

Jack Rems
Owner, DARK CARNIVAL
Berkeley, CA

Conventions do one thing that absolutely no other activity does: They bring comics fans, comics dealers, and comics professionals face to face. We've attended them as fans, as dealers, and as professionals

--and it is that communication that is marvelous.

Conventions have resolved misunderstandings. Conventions have given us fresh ideas. They've let us meet fans and pros and dealers. Conventions offer an environment in which sellers meet buyers and would-be creators meet professional editors. We all join in a world of commonly held affections.

We've been able to renew old friendships, straighten out problems, make new friends, find what we've been looking for, talk with a full range of fellow fans, be with people we admire, and communicate our needs and ideas to a wide audience.

This hasty note comes across as formal and dull--which is something comics conventions never are. They've given us communications, a change of pace--and a world of fun. That's what they've done for us.

Don and Maggie Thompson
Editors, *The Comics Buyer's Guide*
Iola, WI

I've been going to cons for many years--from N.Y. to Oregon, L.A., San Diego, and Europe. One advantage of large cons--like Lucca, Italy or San Diego--is the enormous number of friends you see: other professionals who live all over and who you rarely get the chance to see, to chat and have a beer with, to learn what's happening with work; also, to meet new friends whose work you've admired all your life...

Secondly, conventions allow you to listen to the fans, to hear their opinions about what they like or dislike--it's very different to get fans' reactions in person instead of just by mail.

Third, conventions give you the chance to buy some original art or rare comics that are otherwise hard to find. Also, the conferences, the lectures, the tables, the discussions--I enjoy the cons and think that every city should have one!

What have been the failures? Well...I can't think of any except that rarely do the cons have a courtesy room for the pros--in the convention center and not in a faraway hotel, with coffee, sodas, sofas, and tables--just to relax and chat with others without being assailed by fans...

Sergio Aragones
Los Angeles, CA



(C) Sergio Aragones

This summer began as a wonderful time for me to get out and speak with the pros, fans, and dealers regarding *Comics Scene*. I thought we had finally begun to hum along with solid packages and I was looking for a bright future and was willing to hear comments of all kinds. Then, right after Forbidden Planet (Con) in New York, the publishers killed *Comics Scene* (affectionately known here as "Comics Fred"). I had to cancel out of Chicago but got to San Diego where I was deeply gratified by the kind comments from my fellow professionals. Fans wondered what went wrong (I still wonder) and the direct distributors offered their condolences. The con gave me an opportunity to properly bury "Comics Fred", since I couldn't do it with a final issue. I knew we had the best package and it was reassuring to hear it from so many friends and colleagues.

Bob Greenberger
Starlog Press
New York, NY

Like most comics publishers, First Comics aggressively hits the convention trail--in July and August alone, we've been to New York, Philadelphia, Kansas City, Chicago, Houston, Memphis, San Diego, Atlanta, Ft. Worth, and St. Louis! Obviously, we get something out of all this--not just the opportunity to meet our fans and readers: that's important, but we meet the public in comics shops and through our letters pages all the time.

Comics conventions offer us the unique opportunity to ask questions of the readers, to establish a dialogue. We can show off our new titles, new artists, and new concepts, and gauge reader reaction first-hand. We can ask questions: pricing, the type of paper stock, types of future titles, the whole issue of how far is too far...responses to these questions directly affect our editorial policy.

Of course, we also meet other writers and artists and many of them approach us about potential new titles. We meet with comics shop owners and learn how we could best serve them. We meet with various different types of suppliers; color separators, printers, and distributors. Much of what First Comics does during the next year will have its roots in the 1983 summer conventions.

Towards the end of the season, it's quite a burn-out--in the midst of all this, we have to figure a way to actually publish comic books! But it's worth it--we wouldn't pass 'em up for the world.

Mike Gold
Managing Editor, First Comics
Evanston, IL

A precise appraisal of the value of conventions from a professional standpoint seems beyond the scope of this little commentary. But a few short observations might be appropriate.

It can be useful and instructive to meet fans. It can be equally useful and instructive to meet dealers. A certain amount of feedback from the folks who actually purchase your product is always interesting and sometimes valuable. Conventions are a fairly direct way of reaching such folks and getting some first-hand information that might otherwise be difficult to obtain.

Speaking from personal experience, conventions can also be an effective way of promoting a new comic or even a new approach to an old comic. I've been to more conventions in 1983 than in several previous years combined, precisely because I had something new to talk about, and the results so far have been encouraging. The work I'm doing seems to be reaching a wider audience than it did previously.

And finally, where else are you going to be able to run down those last four or five comics that will finally enable you to complete your collection of "Tales of the Null-Croissants"?

Conventions can be very useful animals indeed!

Walter Simonson
New York, NY

And, for the final word on this subject, from Mitch Cohn of Woodstock, NY--who will no doubt kill me when this sees print:

Why don't they have a SLEAZECON--can you imagine the potential guest list?!

Next issue: the return of our regularly-scheduled letters column. Address all correspondence to: THE TELEGRAPH WIRE, 2461 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley, CA, 94704.

THE NEW DEFENDERS[®]



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MARVEL MAKES THE MAGIC!

HARVEY KURTZMAN & WILL ELDER

GOODMAN BEAVER

In the early 1960s, after *MAD* and before *Little Annie Fanny*, our only *HELP!* came from our friend, GOODMAN BEAVER. Yes, Goodman Beaver—all-American man-child who encounters life and survives. Or at least, encounters life and survives as seen through the eyes of master satirists Harvey Kurtzman and Will Elder.

Not since 1963 has Goodman seen the light of the newsstands. Now, Kitchen Sink Press is collecting the various adventures of Goodman Beaver in an 8½ x 11 squareback book. Each panel will be reproduced as a full page, virtually as large as the mouth-drooling original art. These art-size reproductions will allow readers to feast on Elder's wealth of detail and eye-pops without visiting an optometrist.

The stories include: Goodman Meets S*perm*n — in which the M*n of St**l reveals why he doesn't feel up to being the world's only perfect person anymore. Goodman, Underwater — where Goodman learns that even the depths of the sea are not safe, especially with a cuckoo like Hammer Nelson as your guide. Goodman Meets T*rz*n — in which the jungle king, his mate and assorted surly beasts decide to move to New York. Goodman Gets A Gun — Exposing America's fascination with firearms, as off-duty cop Goodman has a brief fling with both Liz Taylbone and Big Lootchie.

After *Help!* magazine (where these first appeared) died, Hugh Hefner lured Kurtzman and Elder to *Playboy*, where innocent blond-haired Goodman Beaver continued—in another gender—as *Little Annie Fanny*.

The Goodman Beaver collection will be published in two editions:

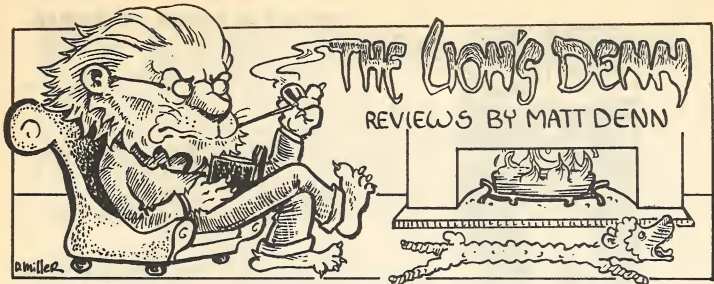
PAPERBACK EDITION (ISBN No. 0-87816-008-6) will retail for \$9.95.

LIMITED HARDCOVER EDITION (ISBN No. 0-87816-009-4) is a deluxe bound edition, limited to 1,250 copies, each of which will contain a special numbered plate signed by both Kurtzman and Elder. Retail \$25.00.

You are urged to place your orders early for the hardcover edition. A similar signed and numbered hardcover edition of *The Art of Will Eisner* sold out in less than two weeks!

Both editions of *Goodman Beaver* (prematurely announced earlier) will be available by late October.





NEXUS

It is going to be very difficult to do an unbiased review of NEXUS, since Capital was kind enough to include a quote from my previous review of the book in its current press release. The temptation is strong to sell out and offer more glowing praise, in the hope that I can once again get my name listed on the same page as Harlan Ellison's--but for the sake of you readers, I will remain my ever-honest self.

NEXUS is the most wonderful piece of literature to hit the face of the earth since the creation of the Holy Bible.

Take two.

NEXUS is without a doubt the finest straight superhero book appearing on the stands today. Its creators, Mike Baron and Steve Rude, seem to have both the un-jaded enthusiasm of amateur creators and the talent and experience of some of the industry's best. This combination makes NEXUS the superb book that it is.

While George Freeman's coloring job on NEXUS #1 is still unmatched, the coloring in #3 is much better than that in #2--which is to say that it intrudes less on Rude's artwork. Yes, I still feel that Rude looks best in stark black and white, and while Freeman is such a meticulous colorist that he manages to make the colors a separate artistic entity in and of themselves in #1, the other colorists are merely good ("merely good"?). I think that in most instances they clutter Rude's work rather than embellish it.

Allow me to stop moaning for a minute, though. The artwork beneath those colors is excellent. Rude is best at drawing powerful action scenes, but he is also becoming good at less dramatic scenes, for example the nice moments with Nexus and his lady love Sundra. Also, Rude has shown himself to be an accomplished painter on the covers to the comic. Perhaps a NEXUS annual or special edition with painted color by Rude would be in order!

And then, there is Mike Baron. Ah...Mike Baron. For a man to come out of the wild blue yonder (Wisconsin, that is) and begin writing the best superhero strip to be found in comics is amazing. The subtlety and understatement of his scripts--aided by Rude's closely corresponding artwork--create a different effect from that of standard Marvel and DC fare. His plots are interesting, and so are his characters, who are fleshed out not in wordy captions explaining their every emotion since birth, but in conversations among one another. Here, finally, is a superhero book that occasionally brings its characters down to earth.

And then on the other hand, Baron is also an excellent conceptualist. The premise of the book is very imaginative, as are some of the larger-than-life ideas that are presented. I really have no criticisms of Baron's writing; within the limited genre that he is working in, he is doing one of the best jobs I've ever seen.

BADGER #1

There is much to like about BADGER, most of it having to do with Mike Baron's story. Yup: that Baron guy again. In this book, he demonstrates both his wit and his plotting ability, creating two characters and a situation that promise to be most interesting in future issues.

Baron's story is fast moving and intriguing, and it is helped along by the interactions between his two main characters, The Badger and The Wizard. The Badger is a vigilante who has escaped from a mental hospital where he was placed for beating up some boys who were killing ducks. Not only does he go around stopping crime, but he seems to enjoy bashing in the faces of the criminals he apprehends--and much as I hate to admit it, there is something appealing about a man who breaks the knee of a mugger. The Wizard is the more interesting character, since his background is more mysterious, and since his powers are more intriguing. The Wizard can do many things, including mentally altering a McDonald's game card to make himself a winner, but his weirdest talent is the ability to turn criminals' assaults back on the criminals. If a man tries to knife The Wizard, he knifes himself. Badger fits too neatly into the mold of the psychotic vigilante by my tastes, but The Wizard is portrayed with a touch of humor and fun that provides a direct contrast to the tone of the rest of the book. He is a little bit wacky himself.

The writing in BADGER is exceptional and if the artwork on the book improves--as it hopefully will next issue, with Rick Burchett taking over the pencils from the somewhat less-than-competent Jeff Butler--then the package will be complete.

I would appreciate knowing what people think of this column, so if you have any comments that you would like to make, send them to me c/o THE TELEGRAPH WIRE. Explosive devices will be disarmed by editor Diana Schutz, so save them for a better time.

COMICS & COMIX CALENDAR

Wednesday, October 5

Meet NEW TEEN TITANS scripter MARV WOLFMAN at our Irving St. store, 4-6 p.m. And then join him in Berkeley, 7-9 p.m.

Thursday, October 6

MARV WOLFMAN will head to the Solano Mall store for a 2-4 p.m. signing, and then to Citrus Heights, 6-8 p.m.

Sunday, October 2

JOHN "Creature Features" STANLEY will appear at our Solano Mall store, 1-4 p.m.

Saturday, October 29

The first day of Comics & Comix' Hallowe'en Party, with guests galore:

FRANK and JAN BRUNNER and KELLEY JONES will host the official C&C "How to Draw Comics" Seminar, 1-4 p.m. at the Sacramento store.

STEPHEN ENGLEHART will appear at the Lombard St. store, 1-4 p.m.

And JACK "King" KIRBY will be at the Solano Mall store, 2-5 p.m., and then will head down to Berkeley for a 6-9 p.m. signing!

Sunday, October 30

More Hallowe'en celebrations continue at Comics & Comix:

JACK KIRBY will return for an appearance at the Citrus Heights location, 12 noon to 3 p.m.

IAN AKIN and BRIAN GARVEY will be in Palo Alto, 1-4 p.m.

Also 1-4 p.m., at our Irving St. store, meet the infamous SISTER BOOM BOOM.

And in Berkeley, 1-4 p.m., join "Eclipse Day" guests DEAN MULLANEY, CAT YRONMOOE, TRINA ROBBINS, and AL GORDON.

For more details on Comics & Comix' gala October anniversary/Hallowe'en party, including special sales, auctions, costume and art contests, see the calendar on the next page.

Friday, November 11

Meet Marvel creators CHRIS CLAREMONT, PAUL SMITH, and JOSEF RUBINSTEIN at our Palo Alto store, 6-8 p.m.

Saturday, November 12

CREATION CONVENTION comes to the Bay Area, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., at the Amfac Hotel in Burlingame. Guests include PAUL SMITH and CHRIS CLAREMONT of X-MEN fame, Marvel inker JOSEF RUBINSTEIN, actor MARK LENARD of STAR TREK III, and many more.

FUTURE EXPO 1983 at the Marin Center, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., with demonstrations, special exhibits, and drawings for prizes, including a UFO Spaceship Model Contest sponsored by Comics & Comix.

Sunday, November 13

CREATION continues at Burlingame's Amfac Hotel, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., with guests CHRIS CLAREMONT, PAUL SMITH, JOSEF RUBINSTEIN, MARK LENARD, and more. For more information, call the toll-free Creation hotline at 800-645-6579. Tickets \$7 per day in advance from Comics & Comix, or \$9 at the door.

FUTURE EXPO 1983 continues at the Marin Center, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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I BEG TO DIFFER, YOU BITCH! THIS WEIRDO IS MINE!!



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


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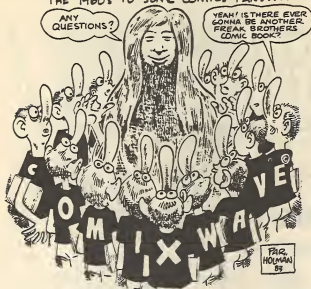
SATURDAY	SUNDAY	M	T	W	T	F
1) COLLECTABLES AUCTION BARGAINS GALORE!! 3-5 PM. 700 LOMBARD, S.F. (415) 982-3511	2) JOHN (CREATURE FEATURES) STANLEY PERSONAL APPEARANCE!!  1-4 P.M.  SOLANO MALL, FAIRFIELD (707) 427-1202	3 ↑	4 ↑	5 ↑	6 ↑	7 ↑
8) ANNIVERSARY PARTY SUPER SALE! REFRESHMENTS! ENTERTAINMENT! 650 IRVING, S.F. (415) 665-5888	9) ART CONTEST 3 P.M. JUDGING - ENTER ALL WEEKEND 515 COWPER, PALO ALTO (415) 328-8100	10	11	12	13	14
15) AUCTION BONANZA! LOADS OF SUPER DEALS, 3-5 P.M. 921 'K' ST. MALL,  SACRAMENTO (916) 442-5142	16) "WHEEL OF FORTUNE" SALE SPIN YOUR OWN DISCOUNT! 2461 TELEGRAPH AVE. BERKELEY (415) 845-4091	17	18	19	20	21
22) MODEL CONTEST BUILD THEM, DISPLAY THEM AND WIN!! 6135 SUNRISE, CITRUS HEIGHTS (916) 969-0717	23) KRQR DAY LOTS OF GREAT PROMO ★ GIFTS!! ★ ALL STORES \ ALL DAY!	24	25	26	27	28
29) HALLOWEEN PARTY 30 31 COSTUME CONTEST, ALL STORES - WEAR ONE OR JUST COME AND SEE THEM! ☺ SPECIAL GUESTS  SPECIAL SALES ☹ CONTACT YOUR LOCAL COMICS + COMIX OR CALL (415) 843-5405 FOR DETAILS						

COMICS & COIX

OCTOBER 1983

KRQR 97 FM the rocker

CLAY GEERDES FINISHES A LECTURE
ON THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CLIMATE OF
THE 1960'S TO SOME COMICS FANS....



Another comic convention. Probably my fiftieth. Haven't kept close track of them over the years. They tend to slide into one another. See this collage of faces. Pictures in my books. Medlasters with copy written around them. Saw April Campbell sitting next to Bruce Jones at the Pacific Comics exhibit. Took a picture. Didn't talk to them. What for? I know what they're doing and they'll have to make small talk with hundreds of people all day, signing dozens of copies of SOMERSET HOLMES and TWISTED TALES. All those autographed funnybooks destined for the trunks in the basements of tomorrow.

There is a lot of star-tripping at the cons. Major and minor league. Everyone wants to get next to someone who is. Instant identity. Hey, Mom, I just shook hands with the guy who inks Sammy the Schmerdrick. The guys I like are the ones who go up to someone like Jack Kirby and want him to sign all of his latest books. Not just one autographed CAPTAIN VICTORY. This nerd wants them all. And Kirby is always mellow about this kind of blatant greed. He signs them all, smiles, and treats the guy like an old buddy from the Bowery. On the other side of the coin, you have ingenué Marvel hacks who want five bucks for their signature. Lots of ironies like that at a convention.

I'm at the San Diego Con. It's at a convention center half a mile from the San Diego Hotel where I've stashed my extra shirt and Snickers. There is supposed to be a shuttle, but I've never seen it. Back and forth with those hernia bags for four days. I'm a guest at the convention. This means I get past the gate free in exchange for giving a lecture on life in the sixties. Ten years I've been a guest in San Diego and never had a dime toward my rent or expenses. Who am I? Nobody. Like you.

It's hot and smoggy in San Diego this time of year. We used to have the pool at the El Cortez. Now we have nothing. Dealers making deals. Everyone promoting their product. Cutey Bunny t-shirts for nine bucks. Collections of Disney covers for \$15. Floyd Gottfredson signing the envelopes at Bruce Hamilton's table. He did the Mickey Mouse strip for 45 years. Had a lot of patience, that one. Now he hits a con once in a while and tells

his story with never a bad word for Walt. Loyalty beyond the grave.

Theme of this con is the sixties. So they flew a lot of underground artists down, right? No, actually, they did what they always do in San Diego, spent the money on Marvel and the heavies and let the rest of us foot our own bills. A sixties theme and who's on hand? Victor Moscoso (ZAP) and Robert Williams (COOCHY COOTY). No Spain, Crumb, Jaxon, Shelton, Wilson, Holmes, none of the people who were the guts of the underground comix. So who gives a damn about the sixties anyway? We're in the eighties now where hippies are as likely to get beaten up on the street by punks. Oh, excuse me, the British keep telling me Punk is dead. Then who the hell are these skinheads, these mohawk-stompers—who were those people who invaded the San Diego Hotel and kept the security people on their toes all week-end? A COMIC BOOK! GIMME THAT! RIP!! CRUNCH! WIPE!

"But that's ACTION NUMBER ONE! That book is worth almost a MILLION DOLLARS!"

"So fuck you and your comic book you little chickenshit capitalist materialist scumbag." Drunk punks racing up and down the stairs in the middle of the night high on crosstops and whatever the going dope is. Midway through the dealers' room (notice it's never the customers' or collectors' room—the dealers own the place), I see fashionable punk couples posing for tourist cameras. Look, Aunt Bernice, the women in California wear studded black leather and carry whips and their boyfriends wear spiked mohawks. Is this why you did it, Wally? Could you see this coming?

A lot of newwave cartoonists came to San Diego. Brad Foster, David Miller, Par Holman, Jim Williams, Jane Oliver, Dave Patterson, and Sam Hallmark. Lots of high energy there. Valentino showing his portfolio around. Black bags everywhere. Midnight jams in the bar. One-liners at the costume show. Dr. Raoul Duke and his All-Human Band played their yearly gig, making fun of it all, and trashing Vince Colletta in the process. Marvel's Jim Shooter raced backstage after their act and called them "assholes". Colletta was in the audience. Well, it was all in fun, Jim. And Vince. Take it lightly. Life's too short and all that rot.

No banquet this year. And why not? Well, I was told it was because Richard Butner was gone. Well, we need the banquet because it unifies things, brings most of us together. Gives us a chance to doodle on the napkins and have some laughs. Arn Saba emceed the costume show and he was nice, but the only laughs came from slapstick like the Joker who missed with the cream pie (Saba ducked). We needed Gary Owens' corpore one-liners.

And, Scott Shaw, we needed Scott. Years ago, it was Shaw who covered himself up with peanut butter and came to the contest as The Turd. Who could afford that much peanut butter today?

COMIX WAVE is a registered trademark of Clay Geerdes. 1983, all rights reserved. Used here by permission. For more of Clay's writing on the underground/newwave scene, be sure to check out his own long-running newsletter, COMIX WORLD/COMIX WAVE, published bi-weekly since 1973. A two-year (48 issues) subscription can be obtained for only \$11. From: Clay Geerdes, P.O.B. 7081, Berkeley, CA, 94707.

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All coupons are redeemable at Comics & Comix from November 1, 1983 through November 23, 1983. Coupons apply only to merchandise specified at full retail price and are limited to one per customer per store.

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